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beauty—a circumstance very rare in China, where matches are almost always made from interested motives."

Almost all the Chinese whom our author has seen, except those of the very lowest class, could read and write. Education, he says, to a certain extent, is more common and better diffused among them than amongst the poor of any other country.

"In a country where the industrious find readily the means of subsistence, and where *Shing-Shangs*\* abound, the expense of having a few characters of the ordinary sort imprinted on a child's memory cannot be much, nor beyond what most of the common people can afford, who have health and strength to labour. Most of the Chinese are naturally intelligent, and, applying themselves diligently to whatever they take in hand, of course acquire soon what they wish to learn. In short, they are naturally a well-disposed, excellent people, whose good qualities, under a better government, would render them rich and happy. It is impossible, even now, under all the difficulties they have to encounter, to live a month in China without being struck with admiration at the activity, industry, perseverance, and frugality of the middling and lower classes. If a Chinese can only find the means of amassing a few dollars, he will certainly increase his capital by economy and persevering attention to his business, until he places himself far out of the reach of want. It must not be inferred from this, that there are not a great many debauched and profligate people amongst them. There are certainly very many; but fewer, in proportion to the amount of population, than in other countries.

"The facts I have stated respecting the administration of their government prove it to be a very bad one; and it must always be considered a national disgrace, to see a country destitute of public hospitals, or any humane institutions whatever, whilst crowds of beggars die of want in the streets!"

We know not where so much information relating to Siberia and China, particularly the latter country, can be found, conveyed in so compendious and pleasing a form, as in these two volumes of Mr. Dobell.

\* Literally astrologers, who also make literature their profession, and act as domestic tutors.

## NOTICES OF BOOKS.

*A Dictionary of the English Language*, intended to exhibit:—1. The origin and the affinities of every English word, as far as they have been ascertained, with its primary signification, as now generally established.—2. The Orthography and the Pronunciation of Words, as sanctioned by reputable usage, and where this usage is divided, as determinable by a reference to the principle of Analogy.—3. Accurate and discriminating definitions of technical and scientific terms, with numerous authorities and illustrations; to which are prefixed, an introductory dissertation on the origin, history, and connection of the Languages of Western Asia and Europe, and a concise Grammar, philosophical and practical of the English language. By W. Webster, L. L. D. 2 vols. 4to. Black, Young and Young, London.

The preceding announcement is the title of a Work, publishing in Numbers, the first of which has recently been put out. The author, as

appears from several passages in the introduction, is a citizen of the United States. As far as the philosophy and orthography of the language is concerned, we see no reason why a work of this nature should not be compiled by a Transatlantic, as well as by an indigenous Englishman; with respect to what concerns pronunciation, "as sanctioned by reputable usage," we cannot but entertain doubts whether the means attainable by a foreigner to acquire the necessary information on this delicate portion of his undertaking, be sufficient to entitle him to promulge a new system of orthography, or to make any serious alterations in that already sanctioned by the authority of writers whose works have met with general approbation.

But we cannot yet finally decide on this point. The work is only partially before us. The number published, contains a portion of the introduction, and the greater part of the letter A of the Dictionary. What appears there, bears ample indications that the author possesses many of the qualities requisite for an undertaking so arduous. His knowledge of languages appears to be extensive, and his researches for authorities to establish the meaning of words not to be met with in previous dictionaries, numerous. The introduction of technical and scientific terms is a very valuable addition to a general dictionary. They have been hitherto excluded from works of this description; but the rapid extension of useful knowledge, which has rendered the Arts and Sciences themselves the usual subjects of conversation, in the more educated portions of society, and through which they are extending with equal rapidity into the lower classes, renders the addition absolutely necessary. Terms, any allusion to which would, some years ago, have been considered pedantic, are now of common occurrence, and a dictionary which comprehends them, must command a preference.

The introduction, which, as we have already noticed, is as yet incomplete, exhibits much literary research. It commences with an enquiry into the origin of languages, and the causes of their variations. Commencing with the Scriptural account, the author conceives that the language spoken by Noah and his sons, branched out into two great divisions, the one being that spoken by the descendants of Shem and Ham, who peopled all the great plain situated north and west of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean on the east, and the Arabic Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, together with the Northern coast of Africa.

The languages spoken by the nations inhabiting those regions, except the Coptic, he names Shemitic or Assyrian; that spoken by the descendants of Japheth who peopled Asia minor, the northern parts of Asia, about the Euxine and Caspian, and all Europe, he calls Japhetic.

With respect to the changes produced at the time of the building of the celebrated tower of Babel, though he recognizes the historical fact, he does not consider them as the sole cause of the varieties now existing. "It is probable," he says, "that some differences of language were produced by the confusion; but neither that event nor any supernatural event is necessary to account for the differences of dialect, or of languages now existing. The different modern languages of the Gothic or

Teutonic stock, all originated in the natural course of events, and the differences are as great between them as they are between the languages of the Shemitic stock.

Waiving, as we must, in this introductory notice, any observations on the position here laid down, we cannot but remark, that the writer wholly passes over many of the languages now spoken in different and very extensive regions; we see no mention of the Chinese, and what appears to us still more extraordinary, the languages of the aboriginal Americans, are passed over as if they had no existence. Had his disquisition been confined to those languages from which the English, which constitutes its main object, originated, or with which it is more or less connected, the omission would be justifiable; but when he adopts so decidedly, the primary two-fold division of the original language, to the necessary exclusion of any other, and considers the confusion at Babel as only of secondary effect, he ought, we conceive, to have allotted all the other known languages of the world, their proper positions under one or other of the great stocks. It may perhaps be said, that on reference to the title it will appear, that he directs his attention solely to the languages of Western Asia and Europe; if so, the sweeping clause in the commencement of the introduction, in which he makes mention of two, and only two, radical languages, requires some modification or explanation.

On the pronunciation of the English language, Dr. Webster is very copious. His account of the attempts made to reduce it to system, commencing with that of Elphinstone, is full and satisfactory. He points out several errors, into which preceding writers on this part of Grammar have fallen, and several changes through which the oral language of the country has deviated, from what was the standard some time ago. The notation adopted by him, for expressing the true sound of the vowels, is much simpler than that introduced by Sheridan, and followed by Walker; and if found equally efficient, (which we cannot decide on till we have seen more of the book,) will of itself entitle it to a high place among publications of this class.

On the whole, we have viewed this number with much gratification. Independently of its absolute merits, we greet it on account of the quarter from which it comes. It is one of the waves of the reflux-tide of civilization towards the shores whence it first arose, equally honorable to the giver and to the receiver. The second number is just published, but has not yet reached Dublin.

*The Family Library*, No. 12. Southey's Life of Nelson. Murray, London.

We know of no more excellent or delightful piece of biography in any language than Southey's Life of Nelson; it is a book worthy at once of the hero and of the author, and that is speaking volumes. The period when first we read it, and resolved that we too should be a hero, still haunts one of the greenest spots in our memory. The principal novel feature we have observed in the new and beautiful edition now presented to the public, is a series of wood cuts, spiritedly designed by G. Cruikshank, and admirably engraved by Thompson and Williams.